

The Later Avon Valley Copper and Brass Industry

1740 to 1925

Abstract

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(Saltford Brass Mill Project)

By the mid 18th century, a sophisticated copper and brass industry had been established in the Avon Valley, producing pans and kettles, collectively known as hollowware, for overseas markets. Technological advances continued to be made, including, the manufacture of brass wire using water-powered rolling, slitting and drawing apparatus, carried out at the Avon Mill at Keynsham, and the use of water-powered rolls to produce sheet copper and brass, carried out at Saltford Brass Mill. Further developments included the distillation of zinc from calamine ore, enabling advances in the production of brass.

A key person in the industry at this time was Nehemiah Champion, who established a new company based at Warmley, which took advantage of improved brass making and manufacturing techniques. By the end of the century, however, market forces had caused the copper smelting industry to move to Swansea, where more plentiful coal was available, the centre of the brass industry to move to Birmingham as the industrial revolution took hold and Liverpool to usurp Bristol as Britain's second port.

The Bristol Brass Company consolidated its activity on two sites, the Avon Mill at Keynsham and the Brass Mill at Saltford, and in this form continued in operation until 1925.